PR 6023
.I59 K5
1914
Copy 1

THE KING WHO HAD NOTHING TO LEARN

THE KING WHO HAD NOTHING TO LEARN

A FANTASTIC COMEDY
IN ONE ACT

By

LEON. M. LION

Author or Adaptor of—
"The Touch of the Child," "Mr. Jarvis," "Playing the Game," "The Mobswoman," "Promotion," "The Man who Stole the Castle," "The Fairy Uncle," "The Superior Sex," "Pistols for Two," "Love's Comedy," etc

COPYRIGHT, 1914, BY SAMUEL FRENCH, LIMITED

NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
PUBLISHER
28–30 WEST 38TH STREET

LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD
26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET
STRAND

PR6023
.I59K5
1914

Transferred from
Copyright Office
MAY 1 '31

APR 11 1914

THE KING WHO HAD NOTHING TO LEARN

COSTUMES

KING CAROLA : *The Boy King of Bolkania*	The uniform of an English Colonel of Huzzars, with plumed helmet and sword.
RICHARD DAVENHAM : *His English Tutor* . . .	Ordinary English Morning Dress.
TANTA NATCHA : *A good-natured Gardener's wife* . . .	The Bulgarian Peasant Woman's Costume.
KATRINA : *A Peasant Girl from a distant Province* . .	The Bulgarian Peasant Holiday Costume.

PROPERTIES REQUIRED.

Rush Basket and Rag-face Doll—for Katrina.

SCENE

The Throne Room of the Winter Palace of Bolkania.

The fee for each and every representation of this play by Amateurs is One Guinea, payable in advance to—

Messrs. Samuel French, Ltd.,
26 Southampton Street,
Strand, London,

or their authorized representatives.

No performance may be given unless a written permission has first been obtained.

All the costumes, wigs, and properties used in the performance of plays contained in French's list may be hired or purchased reasonably from MESSRS. CHARLES H. FOX, LTD., 27 Wellington Street, Strand, London.

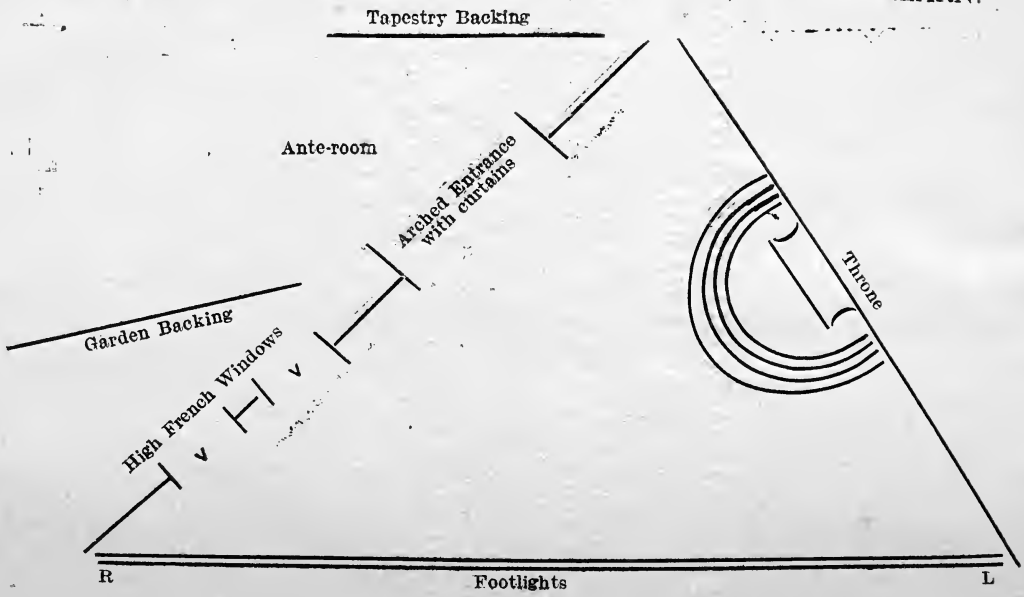
THE KING WHO HAD NOTHING TO LEARN

Produced at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester (under the management of Miss A. E. F. Horniman), on February 9, 1914, with the following cast :—

KING CAROLA . . .	*Master Layton Horniman.*
RICHARD DAVENHAM . .	*Mr Herbert Lomas.*
TANTA NATCHA . . .	*Miss Dorothy Hick.*
KATRINA	*Miss Hilda Davies.*

Produced by—Mr. DOUGLAS GORDON

STAGE PLAN OF "THE KING WHO HAD NOTHING TO LEARN."



THE KING WHO HAD NOTHING TO LEARN

SCENE.—*The Throne-room of the Winter Palace in Bolkania. See stage plan. A corner of the room is seen at right angles. Along one wall running from down* L. *to back* C., *is a large semi-circular dais, with three circular steps running round it. On the top of this is the royal throne of Bolkania —a rococo piece of gilded magnificence, flanked on either side by palms and battle-standards. On the* R. *wall (running from up* C. *to down* R.) *there is (up stage) a handsome arched entrance, heavily curtained, opening on to a corridor leading to the other royal apartments. Below this (down stage) large double French windows, opening on to the Palace garden. These windows must be sufficiently high for a flood of sunlight to strike through them full on to the throne.*

(*The curtain rises on an empty stage. The Belfry clock in the distance chimes seven. From arched entrance up* R. KING CAROLA *enters. He is a handsome boy about* 12, *dressed in the uniform of an English Colonel of Huzzars. He comes on stealthily, listening to see if he is followed, then he pulls curtains to behind him, and runs to the steps of the dais* L. *on which the throne is set.*)

CAROLA (*in boyish glee at having eluded his guardians*). Alone! Alone at last!

(*He crosses softly to window* R., *and unbolts it with some difficulty. Just as he opens it and is about to exit,* DAVENHAM *comes silently through the curtains up* R. *He is a characteristic young Englishman, about* 35,

fair, well-built, with smiling eyes, and invincible good humour. He watches CAROLA *opening window.*)

DAVENHAM (*quite quietly*). Did your Majesty call?

CAROLA (*turning*). Bother! I thought you were asleep.

DAVENHAM (*smiling*). No, your Majesty. (*Coming down* C.)

CAROLA. Do Englishmen never sleep?

DAVENHAM. Sometimes. But never on duty.

CAROLA. Our papers say that John Bull always has one eye open.

DAVENHAM. So he has. But I'm not John Bull, you know.

CAROLA (*leaving the window half open, and coming up* C. *to* DAVENHAM). You are to me. The one real Englishman I know. Why have you followed me here?

DAVENHAM. It's my duty, your Majesty. You know you are not permitted to go anywhere unattended.

CAROLA (*petulantly*). Why can't I do what I like? (*Crossing* L. *to steps of throne, down.*) What's the good of being a king, if one can't do what one likes?

DAVENHAM. The whole business of a king, Sire, is to be doing what other people like.

CAROLA (*petulantly*). Oh, I wish I was a cowherd or a donkey boy!

DAVENHAM. Why?

CAROLA. They *can* be free sometimes. Or even an Englishman. (*Coming back to* DAVENHAM.) Every one does what they like in England, don't they?

DAVENHAM. More or less. So long as they don't do what other people don't like.

CAROLA. Yes, but even your kings do just what they please, don't they?

DAVENHAM. They please only to please others,

your Majesty. (*Sententiously.*) The first lesson every Englishman learns is to obey—and learning to command himself, he fits himself to command others.

CAROLA (*quite unimpressed*). Doesn't sound a bit nice! All the Englishmen I've met seem such jolly fellows. Not just stiff wooden soldiers like the Germans and the Russians. (*Strutting up stage and down again, very stiffly.*) That's why I like wearing this uniform.

DAVENHAM (*going a little down* R. *and watching* CAROLA *amusedly*). The 47th Huzzars, your Majesty.

CAROLA. Yes, they made me an honorary Colonel, you know. I wish I could go and do some real fighting with them. (*He lunges down* L., *as with a sword.*)

DAVENHAM. The first lesson I propose to give your Majesty this morning, is on the military history of Great Britain.

CAROLA (*impatiently*). Oh! I know quite enough.

DAVENHAM. Of what?

CAROLA. Of everything! I don't want to learn any more stupid lessons. (*Coming* C. *to* DAVENHAM.) I want to see things for myself, use my own eyes and ears. That's why I've kept running away from you.

DAVENHAM. Your Majesty's frankness is engaging. But what will your Ministers and your Uncle the Regent say to you, if I report that you are constantly playing truant from your studies?

CAROLA. Playing truant? Oh, I know what you mean. That's what the English school boy calls "doing a bunk."

DAVENHAM (*laughs*). Your Majesty is well up in English school slang.

CAROLA (C.). Rather! I get every English book I can. I say, you're "a real good sort"!—that's what the English say when they like anybody, isn't it?

DAVENHAM (*smiling*). That's it!

CAROLA. So I don't mind telling you why I've tried to get away from you. I read in that book. —"The Arabian Nights"—about that *other* king, hundreds of years ago, the Caliph of Bagdad! He wanted to see things for himself, and hear what people said of him, so he went about disguised, and had some awfully good fun.

DAVENHAM (*seriously*). Your Majesty might not find it such good fun. Kings are not as popular as they were hundreds of years ago. Your Majesty might hear things that would make you angry.

CAROLA (*lightly*). Then I could have them beaten to death, couldn't I?

DAVENHAM. I'm afraid not, Sire. That is another habit that has gone out of fashion.

CAROLA (*backing away slightly* L.). I say—you don't mean, now I have told you, that you won't let me go out disguised to hear what people say?

DAVENHAM. It is not possible, your Majesty: it is too great a risk.

CAROLA (*turning, and sitting down on the steps of the dais*). It is a beastly shame! I don't like being a king a bit, not one little bit!

(*On the verge of tears, he bangs the steps petulantly, and turns his head away.*)

DAVENHAM. Come, come, your Majesty, that isn't very kingly. Temper! Insubordination! And in an English uniform too! Such a thing's never been heard of. (*There is a noise of footsteps from outside window* R.) Listen! Some one's coming. That will be the servants to prepare the Throne-room for your audience this afternoon. (*Crossing above* CAROLA *and patting him on shoulder.*) You don't wish *them* to see you like this, do you? Come, buck up! Be a man!

CAROLA (*crossing* R.). I *am* a man! Here—(*turning and catching him by the sleeve*)—help—me to be

like that Caliph of Bagdad. Come with me behind this curtain here, and listen!

(*He drags* DAVENHAM *into the shadow of the Archway* R., *peeping out from behind the curtain during the ensuing scene.*)

KATRINA (*heard outside—calling excitedly*). Tanta Natcha! See! See! The window is open. Let me peep.

(*Big window down* R. *opens slowly.* TANTA NATCHA *and* KATRINA *come in.* TANTA NATCHA *is a typical peasant woman of the country, aged about* 35. KATRINA, *her niece, is a girl of* 11 *or* 12, *very bright and quick-witted. She carries a small rush basket.*)

TANTA. Quietly then! Go quietly! No one's about yet. Royal servants are late sleepers. We must be gone before they come.

KATRINA (*setting down the basket below window* R., *and gazing around*). Is this the King's room?

TANTA. Yes.

KATRINA. Where his friends come to tea with him?

TANTA. Yes, yes! And that's where he sits, on that gold chair on the top of all those steps.

(TANTA *goes to step of throne, and curtseys awkwardly and grotesquely.*)

KATRINA (*down* R.). Oh, Tanta! You do look funny! (*Imitates her, bobbing up and down.*) What did you do that for?

TANTA. Do what, child?

KATRINA. Bob up and down like this. (*Still imitating her.*)

TANTA. I was bowing to the great throne of the Kings.

KATRINA. Will it do you good, Tanta?

TANTA. Who knows?

KATRINA. Could it harm you?

TANTA. God forbid! *Bows more slavishly than ever.*)

KATRINA. The King sits up there? (*Coming* C.)

TANTA (*still bowing*). Yes, child, yes.

KATRINA. But why do they sit him up so high? He can't play with anybody.

TANTA. Bless the child! (*Turning to her.*) He doesn't want to play with anybody. Nobody would play with a King! He must sit up there, all by himself, because he is so much greater, and grander, and better than anyone else.

KATRINA. Is he? Why?

TANTA. *Why!* Because he is a King.

KATRINA. But why is he a King?

TANTA. Bless the child! (*Puzzled.*) Because he sits up there! Now come along home, you've seen it all. Your Uncle Nikola would never forgive me if he knew how I smuggled you in. (*Crossing down* R. *to window.*)

KATRINA (C.). Wait a minute. I want to see the King. (*Trying to detain her.*)

TANTA. A little child like *you* can't see the King.

KATRINA. Why not? A cat can look at a king, you know.

TANTA. Bless the child! He never gets up till the afternoon. Great people have parties all the night, then sleep half the day. (*To window.*) Come, if we were found here your Uncle Nikola might lose his place as Assistant to the Under Gardener.

KATRINA (*advancing towards throne*). Why does the King have so many steps to his chair?

TANTA. That's so as to keep the rest of the world in their position.

KATRINA. How? (*She steps on to the first platform.*)

TANTA (*coming forward*). Bless the child! You mustn't go up there! No one less than a Duchess may stand on the steps of a throne.

KATRINA (*going up*). Well, why shouldn't *I* be a Duchess?

TANTA. Eh?

KATRINA (*she goes up next step*). Why shouldn't *I* be a Princess? (*She goes up the last step—and sits upon the throne.*) Why shouldn't I be a *Queen?*

TANTA. Oh, Saints preserve us! The child's gone mad. Come down! Come down! That's high treason to get into the King's seat. We shall all be hanged. (C., *wringing her hands.*)

KATRINA. Nonsense! It's only a game: just like the one we play in the old barn at Kranowa. "Who'll be king of the castle." Kings must be very like little children if they play games like this. (*She is seated in the chair, and shifts about, swinging her legs.*) I don't think it is very comfortable. You look so funny, Tanta, shivering down there.

TANTA. Come down at once, child, or I'll call your Uncle.

(CAROLA *nudges* DAVENHAM, *and gives a suppressed laugh.* TANTA *turns at the sound with a little shriek of dismay.*)

Saints preserve us! Some one is coming! Run, child, run—

(*In a panic of apprehension, she flies out through window* R. CAROLA *and* DAVENHAM, *who throughout have been in sight of the audience, though unseen by* KATRINA *and* NATCHA, *slip out of sight behind the curtains.* KATRINA *leaps down from the throne —takes one hasty peep through the archway, and then runs down to window* R.)

KATRINA (*calling softly through window*). Tanta Natcha! Tanta Natcha! It's no one! Come back!

CAROLA (*peering round the arch and whispering to* DAVENHAM). This is a real adventure at last! *I'll* show her what a King is like.

KATRINA. She doesn't hear me! How silly! To be frightened at nothing!

(*She turns to look at the throne again, and, curiosity overmastering prudence, she tiptoes back to it, nodding sagely to herself.*)

I would like to see a real King up there!

(CAROLA, *with a warning gesture of silence to* DAVENHAM, *slips quietly into the room.*)

CAROLA (c., *bowing to her*). Good day to you, Madam.

KATRINA (*turns with a startled exclamation*). Oh!

CAROLA. Are you the Queen?

KATRINA (*still on the top step*). Eh—yes—no! Have you come to play with me? Who are you?

CAROLA (c.). Well, I'm——(*Laughs.*) I'm not quite sure who I am, but I'm supposed to be in charge of this throne-room.

KATRINA (*she looks at his uniform*). Oh! I see, you're a little soldier! A bugler? Or a drummer boy?

CAROLA (*laughing*). Well, I blow my own trumpet sometimes. But who are you? I didn't know there was a Queen in Bolkania.

KATRINA. Oh, I'm not a Queen, really. I'm only the daughter of Pietro, the Woodcutter, from the Forest of Kranowa. (*Coming down a step or two.*) My real name is Katrina but Uncle Nikola—he's Assistant to the Under-Gardener here, you know—Uncle Nikola calls me "Quizzy."

CAROLA. "Quizzy?" What a funny name! Why?

KATRINA. Because I'm so inquisitive. I'm always asking questions.

CAROLA. What sort of questions?

KATRINA. Every sort. (*With smiling assurance.*) It's only by asking questions you can get to know things, isn't it?

CAROLA (*striving to go one better*). Not always. Sometimes you guess them. That's much more fun!

KATRINA (*bluntly*). But suppose you guess wrong?

CAROLA (*proudly—taking refuge in rank*). *I* never should. Kings never guess wrong!

KATRINA. Oh! Do *you* play at being a King sometimes? (*Jumping down off steps and coming up to him* C.)

CAROLA (*recollecting his incognito*). Oh—er—yes, sometimes!

KATRINA. And sit up in this chair?

CAROLA (*with dignity*). It isn't a chair—it's a throne.

KATRINA (*unimpressed*). Oh! I'll call it a throne when we're playing—but it's really just a chair all the same, isn't it?

CAROLA. No—y—yes—at least—I say! you're asking *me* questions now, *Quizzy!* That's a jolly good name for you. May *I* call you Quizzy?

KATRINA. Oh! (*Doubtfully.*) I don't know! It's only one's friends who may use pet names, isn't it?

CAROLA. But can't I be a friend?

KATRINA. Could you? It's very difficult. (*Sitting* L., *on bottom step of throne.*)

CAROLA. Is it? Why? What do you mean by a friend? (*She hesitates.*) There! That's a question too hard for you to answer. (*He stands in front of her challengingly.*)

KATRINA (*stoutly*). No, it isn't. A friend is—is just some one who knows all about you and likes you just the same.

CAROLA. Oh! (*Considering.*) Well, I *like* you. I like you very much. (*He bends over her, one foot on step above which she is sitting on.*)

KATRINA (*with warming candour*). But you don't know anything about me, do you? You've never seen me happy, and you've never seen me cross. You don't know how bad I can be, nor how good.

You've got to play with people a long time before you can know that.

CAROLA (*setting down his hat on throne step—up stage*). All right, let's commence—to play, I mean. (*Striding* C.)

KATRINA (*jumping up—excitedly*). Do you really mean it? Here?

CAROLA. Rather! No one will interrupt. (*Loudly—looking towards* DAVENHAM'S *hiding place.*) The King won't want this room for hours yet.

KATRINA (*clapping her hands*). Then let's play at Kings and Queens. I often play it with Vladimir at Kranowa.

CAROLA (C.). Who's Vladimir?

KATRINA (L.C.). He's the swineherd's son—and a cripple. But he makes a very nice kind king. You should see how happy every one is, when *he* starts to rule.

CAROLA (*half laughing—half annoyed*). A swineherd's son! And a cripple! What can *he* do? (*Turning away* R.)

KATRINA. Oh, no! I mustn't tell you that. We all have to make it up for ourselves.

CAROLA (*coming* C. *again*). Oh! All right! How shall I start?

KATRINA (*advancing*). Climb up on the throne there. (*She points to it. He hesitates, looking at her curiously.*) Don't be afraid, it's only just a chair—painted—and not a bit comfortable.

CAROLA (*with a laugh, runs across to throne, and stands on top step*). Where do you sit? You're the Queen, I suppose?

KATRINA (*from* C.—*looking up at him*). Oh, no! We can't have a Queen when there's only two of us playing. I've got to be all the others.

CAROLA (*seating himself*). What others?

KATRINA. Your subjects: anybody you like to summon to the King's presence. The Chamberlain, or the Prime Minister, or the Court Dancer, or

the Chief of the Police. I can play any of them you like. Wait a minute, you *shall* have a Queen. There's the Queen of Sheba.

CAROLA. I say! I'm not Solomon, you know.

KATRINA. Of course not, silly! It's my doll. Here she is.

(*She runs across to window, and picks out of the basket she has set down on entering, a large rag doll, which she carries over for his inspection.*)

CAROLA (*regarding the doll unfavourably*). Oh, I say!

KATRINA (*comprehending his protest*). No, perhaps she's not much to look at, but she is as wise as most Queens. And she's very *silent!* There—let her lean against you—so! (*She props the doll up beside the throne down stage, and steps back* C., *regarding it critically.*)

CAROLA. Oh, all right! What do I do now?

KATRINA (*surprised*). Whatever you want to do! *You're* playing the King. Kings are very wise. They must know what to do without their subjects telling them.

CAROLA. Oh, must they? I hadn't thought of that. Now what does a King most want? I know—he wants to be amused.

KATRINA (*disappointed*). What a funny sort of a king! And who do you want to amuse you—the Prime Minister?

CAROLA (*hastily*). No! Prime Ministers talk too much. He'd make me tired.

KATRINA. The Chamberlain?

CAROLA. No, he fusses too much. I want to be *amused!* (*Remembering.*) The Dancing Girl! That's the one I want.

KATRINA. The Court Dancer? Certainly, your Majesty. (*She makes a little run, down stage and back again—then a low curtsey.*) I am here, your Majesty.

CAROLA (*incredulously*). But I say—*can* you dance?

KATRINA (*curtseying again*). As your Majesty commands.

CAROLA (*still doubting*). No, but *really* I mean. . .

KATRINA (*assuredly*). Whatever your Majesty desires—the Czardas—that's what we dance on our feast days at Kranowa.

CAROLA. Yes, let's see that.

(*She dances a short, wild, Slavonic dance, full of quick movement, and with rhythmic beat—something characteristically full-blooded and barbarian, finishing with startling suddenness.*)

CAROLA (*at the finish*). Bravo! I say, that's jolly! (*Clapping his hands.*) Do some more.

KATRINA, Certainly, your Majesty. [1] [The Bridal dance? This is what our girls dance at the weddings. It starts with the courtship, see! (*She dances a little.*) Then the chase through the Forest, see how wild! How wild! The capture by the magic pool, all silver in the moonlight. The first kiss—the hope—the waiting—the Bridal day.

CAROLA. Splendid! I do like that. Now another!] [1]

KATRINA. The Court Dance? This is how they do it in the Palace. *Real* kings and queens, I mean, not make-believes, like you and me.

CAROLA (*with provoking assurance*). *You* cannot dance the Court Dance!

KATRINA. I can!

CAROLA. I don't believe it!

KATRINA (*stamping her foot in anger*). That's very rude! I tell you I *can!* Oh! but that was rude too! I'm sorry. Now you won't like me any more.

CAROLA (*generously*). I'm your friend. (*With a touch of unconscious hauteur.*) You may kiss my hand. (*Holding it out.*)

KATRINA. Not now—I'm busy. (*Humming a*

[1] The passages bracketed can be omitted if desired.

little.) See! this is the Court Dance my grandmother taught me. (*She starts to dance an old-fashioned type of Gavotte or Minuette.*)

CAROLA (*as she nears the end*). That's it! Up the centre. Yes, that's right. No, no! See, this is the way it goes.

(*He comes down, and dances a more modern edition of the same dance—each meeting occasionally as partners, and each correcting each other. They finish up with a bow to each other, and sit together on the steps of the throne.* KATRINA *up stage on the second step, and* CAROLA *down stage on the first step.*)

(*Admiringly.*) You're very clever! And yet you're only a peasant girl. (*Sitting hugging his knee and looking up at her.*) Where did you learn all this?

KATRINA. At Kranowa. Grandmother taught me, and old Ivan the schoolmaster, who was once at the Court. But he didn't like it. "There is no room for the truthful man in a Palace," he says. "But in the forest of Kranowa, by the still lakes, and in the shadow of the mountains, there dwells truth, and there one may live unafraid." So there he has lived for years and years and years, and teaches any one of us who is willing to learn.

CAROLA. Was it he taught you these dances?

KATRINA. Some of them. The strange dances, that are not danced by our people. But first he taught me to wonder. "All wisdom comes from the fairies," he said, and it is only if you never kill the wonder spirit, that you can get to know the fairies.

CAROLA. The wonder spirit?

KATRINA. Yes. We're all born with it. It is written on the face of every little baby. Don't you know it? All the babies at home have it. They sit, and in their eyes is the big wonder—there they sit, and wonder, and wonder, and wonder, and never say a word.

CAROLA (*practically*). It doesn't seem much good

then! Oh! (*Hastening to apologize*). I'm sorry, you see, we have no babies here, *nor* fairies. At least, *I*'ve never seen them.

KATRINA. Oh! *I* have. All the summer night the fairies are dancing in the forest, dancing with joy, at the wonder of the flowers, and the wonder of the moon, and the wonder of the birds—and sometimes, old Ivan says, at the wonder of the mortals who grow to understand them. So, you see, those who love the fairies must love dancing. For they are the silent folk, and it's only through their dancing that you can understand their message.

CAROLA. You do know a lot! I thought peasant folk were always so ignorant.

KATRINA. Ah! City folk are more foolish, Ivan says, because they only know the things that are written down in books. And so, they never hear the rain pattering down on the river, bringing wonderful secrets to her from the stars, or the wind whispering *his* secrets in the trees, and sighing and raging because folk won't understand him. City folk only learn things from bankers, and ministers, and police officials, instead of going to the fairies for their wisdom.

CAROLA (*wistfully*). I wish I was going to Kranowa to learn of old Ivan and the fairies.

KATRINA (*jumping up*). Oh! but we are forgetting our game. (*Standing* C.) Who does your Majesty wish to summon next?

CAROLA. Oh, I don't know, some one else to amuse me. (*Still sitting on steps.*) I say, isn't there a court conjurer? (*She shakes her head at him reproachfully.*) Well then, let's have clowns or harlequins—or the Court Dancer again.

KATRINA (*sighs despairingly*). Oh! I don't think you can play this game a little bit. Kings, real kings, don't always want to be amused.

CAROLA (*surprised*). Don't they?

KATRINA. No, they want to *do* things, useful

things, to make their people happier. I don't believe you know anything about a real king.

CAROLA (*stung*). Don't I? (*Rising and coming* C.) Well, you've never seen one.

KATRINA (*confidently*). I know what they are like. They are very solemn and serious, and always trying to keep bad ministers in order.

CAROLA. Oh! Are they?

KATRINA. Look! I'll show you. (*Taking his hands and swinging him round* R.) Let's change places. I'll be king now—you shall be all the others. (*Crossing to steps of throne.*)

CAROLA (*not quite liking it*). Little girls can't be kings!

KATRINA. Well, queen then. It doesn't matter what you call me, so long as I sit in the best chair. (*She seats herself on the throne.*) And the Queen of Sheba—(*taking up doll*)—she shall be my favourite princess.

CAROLA (C.). And have *I* to amuse you?

KATRINA. Oh, not yet. I have all the business of the country to see to first.

(*Clapping her hands imperiously.*

KATRINA. Summon my Prime Minister!

CAROLA (*startled—turning quickly round*). Eh? Where is he?

KATRINA. That's you, silly!

CAROLA (*very shocked*). I say!—you mustn't call me "silly"!

KATRINA (*quite unmoved*). Yes, I may. You have to be any one I wish to summon.

CAROLA (*remembering his rôle*). Oh! I see. Well, here I am.

KATRINA. You may come up to the first step of the throne.

CAROLA (*advancing*). Thanks very much. (*About to sit down.*)

KATRINA (*stopping him*). Oh! Ministers don't sit in the presence of their sovereigns, do they?

CAROLA (*rising*). No, I suppose not. It's rather silly, isn't it? Don't you think *this* one might?

KATRINA (*with royal formality*). Her Majesty is graciously pleased to permit it.

CAROLA. That's all right. (*He sits on first step—looking up at her.*) What happens now?

KATRINA (*conscious of her responsibility*). What is the state of my kingdom?

CAROLA. Oh! (*Hesitates a moment.*) Very nice. Don't you worry, the kingdom's all right.

KATRINA. Are there any wars?

CAROLA (*dolefully*). No! Not a sign of one. I wish there were.

KATRINA. Ah! But you mustn't wish that. It is good that our people have peace. Have they plenty and prosperity?

CAROLA (*somewhat bored*). Oh, I expect so. Ministers aren't supposed to know that, are they?

KATRINA. Of course. That's a Minister's first business—to see that everybody is happy and comfortable.

CAROLA. Is it? No wonder he's so busy.

KATRINA. Why are woodcutters in the forest so poorly paid?

CAROLA. *I* don't know.

KATRINA. Then you ought to know. I must know before to-morrow morning, or I shall cut your head off.

CAROLA (*sitting bolt upright*). I say! (*Very astonished.*) You *are* an inquisitive monarch!

KATRINA. Oh! I've hardly started yet. I shall want to know heaps and heaps of things. Why there are so many poor people in the city? Things must be very badly arranged.

CAROLA (*jumping up*). I say! I don't think this is much of a game. (*Going* C.) Kings, real kings, don't worry over those sort of things.

KATRINA. Oh! I'm sure *good* kings do—else *why* are they kings?

CAROLA (*dumbfounded at such a novel question*). Eh?

KATRINA (*with sudden inspiration*). I see it now! That's why they put the King's seat higher than all the others.

CAROLA (*puzzled—staring at her*). Why?

KATRINA (*confidently*). Because he had to be the best and wisest of all! Able to see *further* than any one. And able to be heard by *everybody* when he speaks.

CAROLA. 'Pon my word! I never thought of that.

KATRINA (*excitedly*). Of course! I'm only just beginning to understand it—*that*'s what the throne is made for! The good king calls together all the wise people he can find, and he makes them nobles, and princes, and archbishops. And he brings them gradually up the steps, almost beside him. Every one coming a step higher, each time they get gooder and wiser.

CAROLA (*curiously*). Well, how high should I come?

KATRINA. You wouldn't come at all as a Minister. You aren't a bit wise, are you?

CAROLA (*standing* C.). But this is only a game—I thought you only wanted me to amuse you.

KATRINA. Well, but you haven't even done that. What *can* you do?

CAROLA (*thinks for a moment, then shakes his head*). I can't dance.

KATRINA. Can you sing?

CAROLA. No.

KATRINA. Or play the lute?

CAROLA. No.

KATRINA. Or tell me stories?

CAROLA. No.

KATRINA. Have you no tricks?

CAROLA (*thoughtfully*). No! At least, only to

bite my nails, and Mr. Davenham says that's a beastly trick.

KATRINA. Mr. Davenham?

CAROLA (*turning towards arch* R.). Yes, he's my English tutor. (*Calling.*) Hi! Mr. Davenham!

(DAVENHAM *comes forward, smiling, from behind the curtains.*)

DAVENHAM. Yes, your Majesty?

KATRINA (*startled*). Oh! (*Rising.*) Were you there all the time? (*Coming down the steps.*) Are you playing this game too?

DAVENHAM (R.). No, but I have been watching his Majesty King Carola at play, when he ought to have been at work.

KATRINA (*coming down* L.). King Carola! But that's the King here—the *real* King!

DAVENHAM (R.). This is his Majesty, young Miss.

KATRINA (L.—*staring amazed at* CAROLA, *not the least abashed*). You! Really! But you don't know how to do it one little bit.

CAROLA (C.—*nodding dolefully*). I know!

KATRINA (*to* DAVENHAM). He can't do anything.

DAVENHAM. Not yet, Katrina, but he's started to learn.

KATRINA. Fancy! (*Looking at him rather surprised.*) I'd always wanted to see a real king. (*She makes a little movement as if to touch him and discover if he is quite real.*) You're a bit of a disappointment.

CAROLA (*stoutly*). I daresay! But I won't be in a year or two, Katrina—and then I will come out to Kranowa and learn from the fairies and old Ivan, and I'll bring him back with me as my chief minister! And you—you shall be a duchess, Katrina.

KATRINA. Really! A real duchess?

CAROLA. Yes, with the right to stand on the *top* step of the throne.

DAVENHAM (*with his hand on* CAROLA'S *shoulder*).

Where you can help to point out to the king the things that really matter.

KATRINA (*curtseying*). Thank you very much, your Majesty. I'll think about it.

(*She turns* L., *to pick up her rag doll, and slowly crosses* R. *away from the throne.*)

CAROLA (*watching her*). You'd like to be a duchess, wouldn't you, Quizzy?

KATRINA (*she runs shyly to the window, then turns back to him*). I'm not sure. I think—yes, I certainly think—I'd rather we played it as a game.

CURTAIN.

Butler & Tanner Frome and London

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 014 704 813 0